Education Policy Analysis Archives

Volume 10 Number 25 **May 8, 2002** **ISSN 1068-2341**

A peer-reviewed scholarly journal
Editor: Gene V Glass
College of Education
Arizona State University

Articles appearing in **EPAA** are abstracted in the *Current Index to Journals in Education* by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation and are permanently archived in *Resources in Education*.

Policy and Practice: Restructuring Teachers' Work

Lisa Kirtman
California State University, Fullerton

Citation: Kirtman, L. (2002, May 8). Policy and practice: Restructuring teachers' work. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *10*(25). Retrieved [date] from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n25/.

Abstract

Despite repeated attempts to reform schools, teachers' work has remained surprisingly stable. The purpose of this study was to investigate implementation of a state-funded restructuring initiative that intended broad changes in teachers' professional roles. Sponsors of the founding legislation reasoned that changes in teachers' roles would contribute to higher student achievement. This study examined the question of whether and how this program of comprehensive whole-school change promoted changes in teachers' roles in school governance, collegial relations, and the classroom. Further, the study traced the relationship of these changes to one another, and weighed the likelihood that they had

the capacity to affect core educational practices. Theoretically, this study is situated in the available literature on teachers' collegial relations; participation in shared decision making; and classroom roles, relationships and practice. Three elementary schools served as the sites for intensive qualitative data collection completed over a two-year period. The schools differed in geographic location (two urban, one rural), but all enrolled a racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse population of students, and more than half of the students in each school qualified for free or reduced price lunch. The study resulted in multiple types and sources of data on teachers' professional roles, including: observations in classrooms, collegial interactions, and governance situations; interviews with teachers (including teacher leaders), parents, administrators, and students; and documents pertaining to the restructuring plans and process. Findings show that changes in the three areas were achieved unevenly in the three schools. All three schools introduced changes in classroom practice and roles, ranging from the adoption of multi-age classrooms to more modest innovations in curriculum or instruction. In only one case were changes in professional roles outside the classroom organized to support and sustain classroom changes. Two of the three schools introduced changes in staff organization (teacher teams) and leadership (governance committees), but under-estimated the professional development and other supports that would in turn support changes in classroom practice. Altogether, it appears unlikely that the observed changes in professional roles were sufficiently well established and connected to affect core educational practice in the long run.

Introduction

Despite repeated attempts to reform schools, teachers' work has remained surprisingly stable. From 1880 to the present, little has changed in the organizational structures, instructional practices, and authority structures of teachers' work (Cuban, 1993). Some authors (Weick, 1976; McNeil, 1988) theorized that this stability is due to the fact that school governance has been situated in the hands of individuals external to the classroom. Lortie (1975) has argued that it is due to the fact that much of teachers' work inside the classroom has been largely independent and individually-controlled. Still others (Rosenholtz, 1991; Cuban, 1993) have argued that teacher-centered instruction is the culprit. Whatever the reason, teachers' work today remains fairly similar to that of 100 years ago; it is characterized as individual work, with the governance power situated in the hands of individuals external to the classroom, and instruction that is largely teacher-centered (Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1982; Cuban 1993).

More recently, Elmore (1996) and others[1] theorized that this stability in teachers' work may be due to the fact that many past reform efforts have not successfully affected the "core" of educational practice. He defines the core of education practice as the teachers and students' role in learning and school practices, and how these ideas about knowledge and learning are manifested in teaching and the classroom. The corealso includes structural arrangements of the school or classrooms such as physical layout, student

grouping, as well as communication among parents, teachers and staff. In short, reforms have not affected what teachers and students do when they are together.

To illustrate this point, reform reports[2] of the late 1980s have devote relatively little attention to the implications that reform initiatives have for teachers' work, professional roles, and collegial relationships**.** For example, the recommendations contained in California's elementary school reform blueprint, *It's Elementary* (1992), touch on the learning environment of the classroom, diversity, and technology as well as organizational issues such as scheduling class work in larger blocks. But the report failed to consider the teacher's role in governance and only touched on some aspects of the teachers' role in classroom or collegial relationships. Thus, the prospects for changing the core of education were reduced.

In 1990, California's School Restructuring Demonstration Program envisioned comprehensive changes in teachers' professional roles that would result in more "powerful learning" for students (California Center for School Restructuring, 1993). One of the purposes of California Senate Bill 1274 (SB 1274) was to test the feasibility of large-scale systemic school reform, the hope being that the bill would affect school sites beyond the schools participating in the bill. In the final form, the bill included the following,

"The demonstration of restructuring is intended to be a five-year effort aimed at improving student learning. The demonstration centers on the goal of engaging all students in powerful learning experiences, and a rich-thinking curriculum which empowers them to become life-long learners. All students, regardless of race, ethnic, linguistic or socioeconomic background need to learn to think critically, solve problems individually or as part of a team, analyze and interpret new information, develop convincing arguments, and apply their knowledge to new situations. The demonstration invites educators to consider radical changes in the way schools and districts operate in order to create a better environment for engaging all students in powerful learning experiences and in a rich, meaning-centered curriculum" (CSBED, 1990, p. 1)

Schools were asked to create new structures and practices that included increased professional collaboration and capacity-building, a greater number of diverse stake holders in decision-making processes, improved curriculum assessment and diverse instructional strategies, increased inquiry by examining students work, and better shaped specific strategies that impact the whole school.[3]

The bill, although generally vague in meaning, would require changes in teachers' work to be successful. This approach of changing teachers' work to change the classroom is uncharacteristic of past reform bills that have virtually ignore teachers' work. Moreover, the bill seems to touch on the issues outlined by Elmore's (1996) core theory. The call for professional collaboration and capacity building could affect the teachers and adult communication and relationships on the school level (collegial relations). The call for the inclusion of greater number of stakeholders in decision-making processes could require a change in teacher, parent and staff roles in school governance (governance). Finally, changes in curricular instructional strategies and the examination of student work could impact teacher and student roles in the classroom (classroom roles and relationships). In short, the bill would require changes in teachers' work in the areas of collegial relations, governance and classroom roles and relationships.

Instead of once again studying why teachers' work has remained stable or why the core has not changed, SB 1274 allowed me to look at a bill that would require changing teachers' work in order to change the core. Using schools that restructured according to Senate Bill 1274, I investigated the following questions: 1) Under what, if any, conditions can restructuring promote changes in teachers' professional roles and practices? 2) Do these changes have the capacity to affect the "core" of educational practice?

The Schools[4]

This section offers a description of each of the focal schools, showing how they were positioned to undertake comprehensive restructuring, and recording the choices they made in the three areas of collegial relations, governance, and classroom roles, relationships and practice. Schools made restructuring choices based in part on SB 1274's theory that altering professional roles and relationships would improve academic achievement. To illustrate this point, I will highlight the following issues: Restructuring effort of each school; Teacher, administrative, parent and student relationships; Externalities that may have affected restructuring.

Web Magnet School

Web is a science and technology magnet school in a small urban district. Web is the smallest of the three case study schools. Web Magnet school was created in 1990. As a magnet school, the school is designed to serve the district's high achieving students. The school is located across the highway from the poorer neighborhood from which it draws most of its students, but the school itself is located in a middle to upper income area. Web does not screen its entering classes of kindergartners, but students transferring to Web from other schools are tested for high achievement levels in math and language arts. Web's students routinely perform better on standardized tests than the rest of the district schools. The wait list for Web enrollment is very long; one parent reported waiting almost two years before her daughter could enter the school. Web serves 280 Pre K through 8th grade students. While the district is approximately 65% Latino and 35% African American, Web's student body is 62% African American, 30% Latino, 3% White, and 3% Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino (School Documents, Fall 1995). Twenty-three percent of the students are classified as LEP, which has grown from 7% in three years (School Documents, Fall 1995). Fifty one percent of the students qualify for free or reduced meals (School Documents, Fall 1995). A teacher gave us the following description of the school:

> T: It opened as a magnet. It opened in Fall of ‘88 as a science and technology magnet. It opened under the superintendent's guidance, [her] dream/vision and parent wish that...it was, you see [a new school] had just started not too long before that and so all of the more mainstream families in the community were going out to the surrounding districts so, [the superintendent] wanted to have something that would keep these people in the community because it's not, and I...any family that asks me and there are many that trust me now, enough to respect the response, when they're talking about sending their child out, I will tell them, don't do it, don't do it

> because it's not a kind place for children in these other schools (Black, Teacher, interview, Spring 1997).

Web's staff consists of 10 classroom teachers, a science teacher, a principal, a computer teacher and a librarian. Other part time adults on site include an*I Have a Dream* coordinator, a *Reading Recovery* teacher, a day care teacher, and tutors from a neighboring university. The staff is 71% white and 29% African American (School Documents, Fall 1995). This school has had two principals since the restructuring process began and both are African-American women. The science teacher is the only male staff member. Web's staff has experienced high turnover, and consequently, there are no staff members remaining who were at the school when the original 1274 grant was written.

Teachers' responsibilities, in addition to teaching, include yard duty, bus duty, computer room duty and fellowship committee. Yard, bus, and computer duty consists of the supervision of children in the assigned areas before and after school. The fellowship committee is in charge of "school parties that keep the morale of everybody up" (Dole, teacher, interview, Fall 1995).

As part of their restructuring effort, Web teachers keep their classes for two years in a row (cycling), moving back and forth each year between two grades. For example, a 5th grade teacher will move with her class to 6th grade. Once the 6th graders move to the 7th grade, the teacher goes back to 5th grade and process begins again. In addition to cycling, Web focused its classroom restructuring efforts on the use of Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) as well as Brain Compatible Instruction in all of the classrooms (see Figure 1).

ITI and Brain Compatible Theories
(Taken from Susan Kovalik and Associates)

The ITI model begins with an understanding of six basic concepts coming from bodybrain research:

1. Emotions are the gatekeeper to learning and performance.
2. Intelligence is a function of experience.
3. Humans in all cultures use multiple intelligences to solve problems and to create products.
4. The brain's search for meaning is a search for meaningful patterns.
5. Learning is the acquisition of useful mental programs.
6. Personality - one's basic temperament - affects how a learner takes in information, organizes and uses it, and orients him/herself with respect to the world and other learners.

Once fully understood, Kovalik's ITI model leads educators to the eight brain-compatible elements as a guide for applying the research through thoughtfully written curriculum and carefully selected teaching strategies:

1. Absence of threat
2. Meaningful content
3. Choices
4. Adequate time
5. Enriched environment
6. Collaboration
7. Immediate feedback
8. Mastery (application level)

In an ITI classroom, students know what they are studying and why. The focus is on developing student understanding of important concepts, such as change, through curriculum that begins with a location or event in the student's world. As students investigate and conduct research to answer the big question, "What's going on around here?" the teacher ensures that state and local learner goals are addressed. At all times, the ITI teacher has answers for the pivotal questions, "So what?" and "Why do we have to learn this?" The teacher can answer Susan Kovalik's guiding questions, "What do you want them to understand?" and "What do you want students to do with it?"

Figure 1. Web Restructuring Philosophy

One thing that sets Web school apart from the two other schools is the union involvement. Several members of the staff were union leaders, and many teachers were very involved in union activities.

Olive Grove Elementary School

Olive Grove Elementary School serves 576 kindergarten through 6th graders in a largely rural area in Northern California. Between 1990 and 1992, the school's Hmong and Mien student population rose from almost nothing to 29 % of the student body. The school is still shaping its Limited English Proficiency (LEP) program in the wake of this population change. Fifty-five percent of the students are white; 7% are Latino; and 7% are African American (School Documents, Fall 1995). Fifty-one percent come from families with income low enough to qualify for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (School Documents, Fall 1995). The school is in the process of applying for Chapter One status based on the high number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. When asked about the history of the school a teacher said,

> T: I think it's important for you to know for your study, do you have any history of where we are. We were pretty well traditional, felt a real, real need to change. Our population was changing rapidly, not only in terms of a huge influx of immigrants, largely Asian immigrants with no English background, we had that, this neighborhood area that we take in, is a very low economic area. Our welfare rate then was high, it's much higher now. We have a huge incidence, at any given time, I have one, two or three kids who have one or both parents in jail. Right now, there are two, mostly drug related problems (Darvy, teacher, interview, Fall 1995).

Olive Grove's teaching staff consists of 23 classroom teachers, 14 aides, and a resource teacher (School Documents, Fall 1995). Three of the 23 classroom teachers are male (School Documents, Fall 1995). There are Hmong bilingual aides. The majority of the staff is white, and the principal is a white male.

As part of their restructuring initiative, the school changed its classrooms to form multiage/multiyear groupings. Classrooms are either self-contained kindergarten, 1/2 combinations, or 3-6 clusters, which consist of approximately 7 third graders, 7 fourth graders, 7 fifth graders, and 7 sixth graders. Children stay with the same teacher and classmates in each of the groupings, culminating in four years with their 3-6 grade teacher. In addition, teachers are grouped in three K-6 grade teams, with approximately seven classrooms making up each team. The school has also adopted class meetings as an instructional change. Teachers are required to hold class meetings everyday. Class meetings begin with students and teacher sitting in a circle. They give complements, they discuss problems, and they discuss class business.

The school has experienced little staff turnover since the grant began; 15 of the 23 teachers working when the grant was awarded in 1991 are still on site, as is the principal. The average years of teaching experience for the staff is 10 years.

Trent Charter School

Trent is located in a low-income section of a large metropolitan area in southern California. The school serves 1146 students in Pre K through 6th grade. Ninety-six percent of the students are Latino; 3% are African American; and the rest are Asian, Filipino, American Indian, and White (School Documents, Fall 1995). Eighty-one

percent of the students are classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), and the school conducts many of its classes and almost all of its yard and lunch activities in Spanish (School Documents, Fall 1995). Ninety-six percent of the students have family incomes low enough to qualify for free meals (including both breakfast and lunch served at school) (School Documents, Fall 1995).

The 126 staff members include 45 classroom teachers, 36 paraprofessionals, and 5 administrators/coordinators (School Documents, Fall 1995). Seventy-two percent of the certificated staff has level "A" fluency or a bilingual credentials (School Documents, Fall 1995). The principal is a Chinese American woman who is fluent in Spanish.

Trent began its reform efforts when the current principal arrived and changed the school governance structure to site based decision-making. Several major grants followed her arrival, including a United Way grant for a parent center, a Healthy Start grant, an RJR Nabisco Next Century grant, and the SB 1274 School Restructuring grant. The school became a California Charter School in 1993, and staff points to this change as the most significant for the school. SB 1274 is, therefore, one piece in a much larger school change effort at Trent.

Trent divides its students into 45 single grade classrooms, which are designated Limited English, English Only, Bilingual (a mix of the first two), Transitional, and GATE. Parents may request the type of classroom they would like to enroll their child in, provided there is room. Parents often request English classrooms, despite staff attempts to convince them of the worth of primary language instruction. The school attempts to transition all its students to English classrooms by the end of the third grade. The school operates on a year round calendar, and last year they used their restructuring money to fund twenty extra pupil days, increasing attendance days from 180 to 200 per year (ESY Days).

School governance is carried out by eight governance committees. Teachers are required to serve on one committee, and must rotate every two years. Each committee must also have a parent member.

The school has focused its classroom restructuring efforts into making sure the writing process is taught in all 1-6th grade classrooms. Also as part of the restructuring effort, the Parent Center was created. The school philosophy is that the school should be the center of the community. The Parent Center is open beyond school hours; and provides clothes, food and English language training; and a referral service for other needs. In addition, in 1997, the school began work on what they call the "Village" which will include a library for public use, a supply store and a teacher-training center on campus. The Center and Village will be run entirely by parents. A parent described the affects of the Parent Center as,

> They've (parents) benefited because the Center helps with family problems. Sometimes we see kids in the yard that don't get along with the others, that fight a lot, so we refer them to the counselor at the Center. She talks with the child and contacts the family. Quite often, families come here before a big problem arises. Sometimes they need medical help, and the Center can refer them to various places. Sometimes they need financial help or counseling. So in this manner the Center is helping the kids and the school (Donner, parent, interview, Fall 1995).

Assumptions about Change

Based on the previous description and past research, many people would make assumptions regarding the possibility of successful change at each of these schools.

- Assumptions about Web: Being such a small school, one might assume that establishing relationships and creating communication channels, training and ensuring that reforms are in place would be easily achieved.
- Assumptions about Olive Grove: Based on the size of the school and the low teacher turnover, one might assume that Olive Grove's situation would be conducive to creating strong trusting collegial relations, general communication, governance change and classroom change. In addition, the multiyear configuration should provide an environment that creates strong parent/teacher relations.
- Assumptions about Trent: A large school might be assumed to have difficulty with communication, relationships, consensus and any type of wide reaching change.

But what I found is that none of the assumptions held true.

Models of Change

At the beginning of this investigation, I posed the question: Did restructuring promote changes in professional roles and practices that have the capacity to change what teachers and students do when they are together?

To determine whether a change has taken place, I will first define professional roles and practice. Professional roles and practice are split into two categories 1) inside classrooms and 2) outside classrooms (See Figure 2 below.).

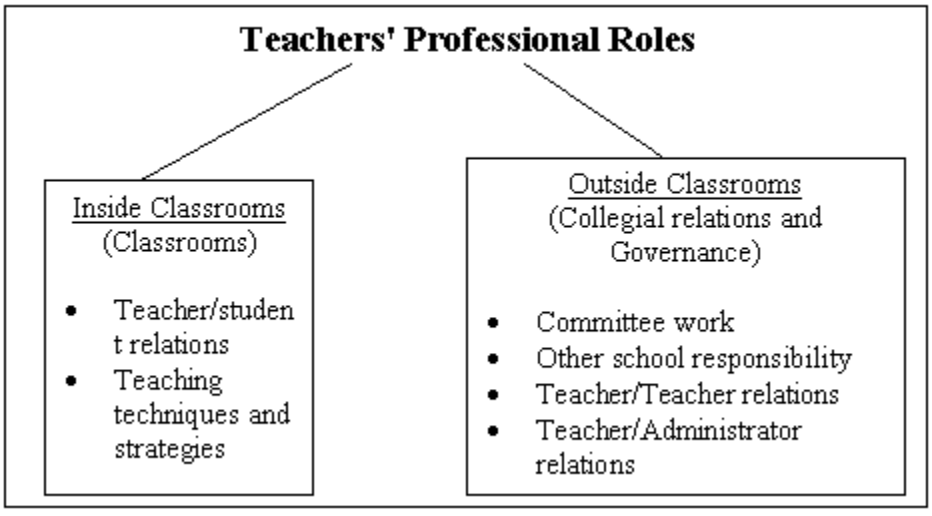

Figure 2. Professional Roles & Professional Practice

At Trent, I found that teachers' roles have been significantly altered through work on committees and in clans. Teachers run all aspects of the school including peer evaluations. But, has there been a change in what teachers and students do when they are

together? The one practice that has clearly been altered at Trent is the addition of the writing process. Every teacher uses the writing process in his or her classroom at Trent. For example, in one sixth grade class, the students participated in writers' workshops (one form of the writing process) everyday that I observed. They publish their writing on the classroom and computer lab computers (classroom observation, Fall 1995 & Spring 1996). Moreover, during an observation of the assessment committee, I observed evidence of the writing process in all 20 rooms that I visited. Teachers were either working on the process when we entered or there was evidence of its use through student and teacher work posted on the walls (classroom observation, Spring 1996).

Also a teacher said, "we push for writing process now. All they do is write, write and write in my class" (Grandville, teacher, interview, Spring 1997). To further illustrate this point, the two sixth grade focus students both said that their favorite subject was Writer's Workshop, which employs the use of the writing process.

Maybe more important than the fact that the changes occurred is the fact that the changes in professional roles seem directly related to the changes in the classroom. At Trent every teacher agreed on the writing process as a focus. Each committee sought a way to affect it. Each clan made sure every teacher was trained in it, and the assessment committee made it one of their focal points to look for when they observed classrooms. If the assessment committee did not find evidence of the writing process in classrooms, the clan was notified, and the clan made professional development and sharing of materials in that area a priority. The following diagram summarizes the change process at Trent.

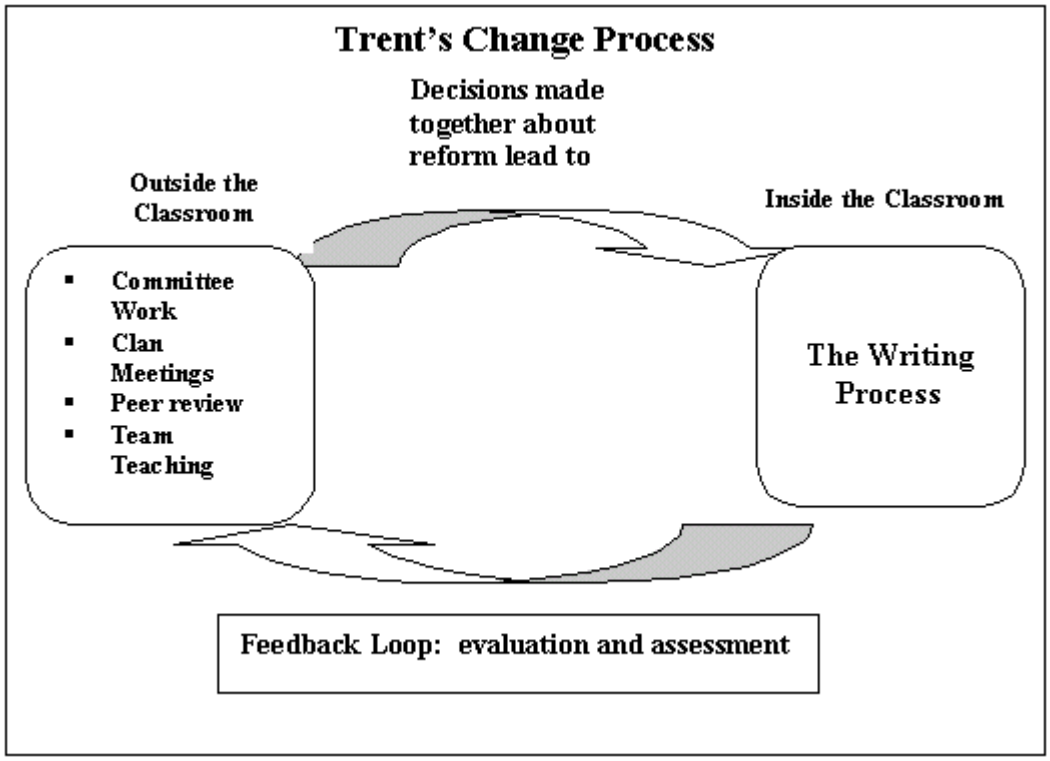

Figure 3. Trent Change Process

At Olive Grove, we also found changes in professional roles and practice, but, unlike at Trent, the changes occurred first and most clearly in the classrooms. As the first step in

Olive Grove's restructuring process, they moved to a multiage/multiyear configuration. In moving to this structure, teachers' roles and practices changed inside the classroom. However, these changes were not anticipated. Teachers no longer used textbooks, and teachers stopped using directed lessons because techniques such as individualized packets made the varying ages of the students easier to teach and control. In addition, to cope with the multiage configuration, teachers needed students to help each other which allowed the "student as teacher" role to arise. Teachers could not always work with all levels at once, so teachers had to move from being the one who asked the majority of questions and gave the majority of answers to one of many teachers in the room. Finally, this change in structure led Olive Grove's teachers to change their focus. They moved from a focus on curriculum to a focus on classroom management, control of behavior and socialization.

After these changes to professional roles and practices occurred inside the classroom, Olive Grove attempted to change teachers' roles outside of the classroom through the creation of action teams. However, these teams had no real power to make changes to the school, no mechanism in place to determine the teachers' learning demands, and "no vision of what to do next" (Zucker, teacher, interview, Spring 1997). Each committee had a different goal with no real connection to or affect on the classroom. They had no mechanisms in place to help teachers cope with the new roles or assess the progress of their reforms.

Although Olive Grove made bold changes in their classrooms, their efforts fell short of the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement. The staff lost focus of the goal and began to focus on control. Since they did not have a mechanism in place to evaluate their efforts, they were unaware of the difficulties, and thus, they were unable to refocus their work.

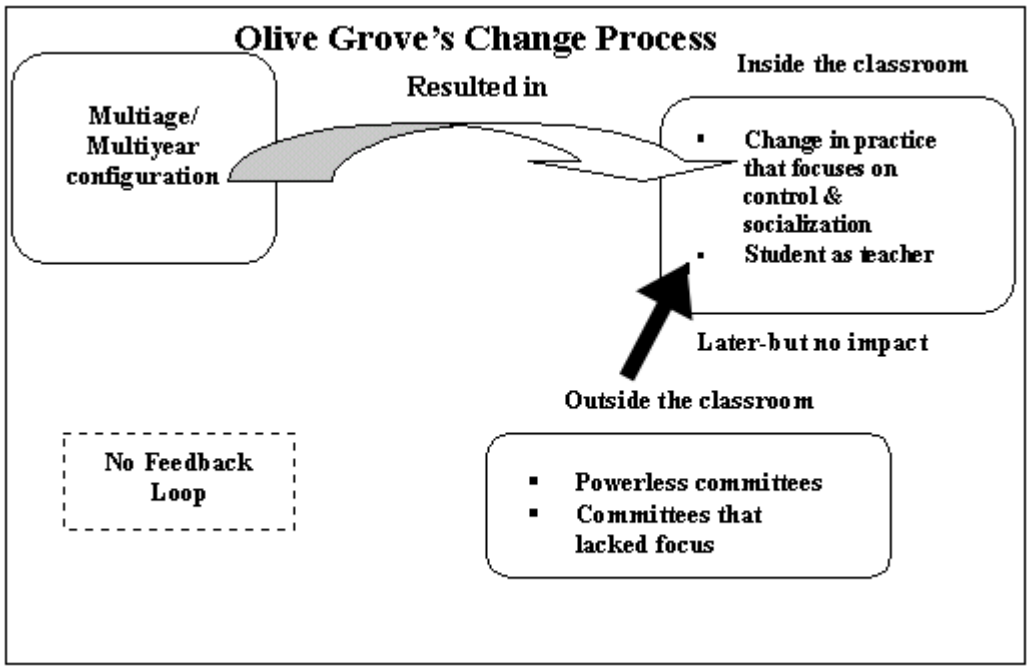

Figure 4. Olive Grove Change Process

The third school, Web, did not demonstrate clear changes to professional roles inside or outside of the classroom. Web, more than the other two schools, continues to function as a "typical" school. Teachers continued to be isolated and administrators continued to lead. However, it is important to note that Web had uniform practices across the school. The small school size enabled the administrator to spend her time checking each classroom weekly to make sure there was evidence of ITI and Brain Compatible Instruction in place. This technique is obviously one way to make change happen at a small school, but it led to low teacher morale, high turnover and superficial adoption of techniques.

Web's reforms may not have resulted in many changes for a number of reasons. It could be the lack of professional development training for new teachers, the high turnover, or the fact that as a small school, the teachers at Web already wear many hats. At a small school such as Web, teachers must take on many roles and responsibilities because they have fewer support staff than a larger school. Thus, maybe there was no shift in teachers' roles from what is typically expected because teachers' roles at Web were not truly typical to begin with.

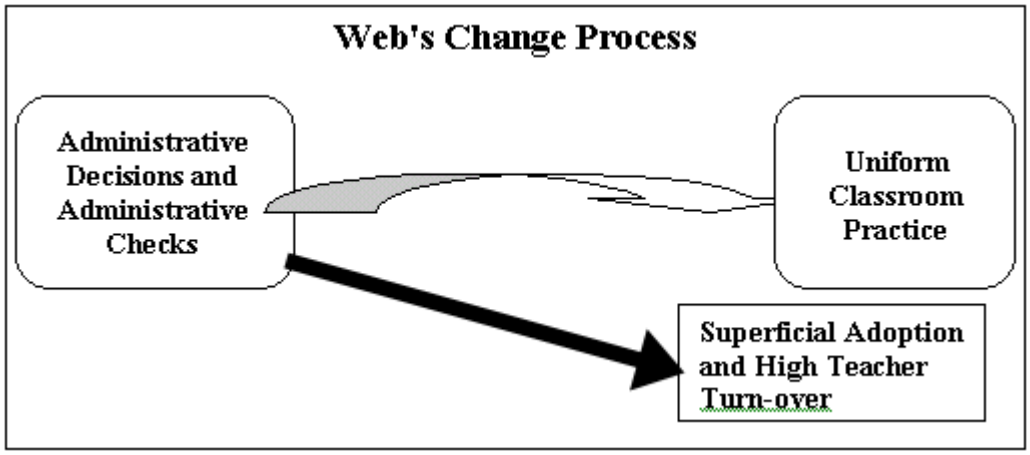

Figure 5. Web Change Process

There are two main points that should be taken from these models. First, changes to the classroom will be uneven, superficial or even negative if professional roles outside the classroom are not organized to support the intended reform. Support may come in the form of professional development, increased time or salary. Support should also come in the form of evaluation and assessment that are needed to make sure the reforms are taking the intended shape.

The second major point is that changes to professional roles outside the classroom are unlikely to affect classrooms unless the changes in professional roles are directly linked to classroom changes. Through examples, such as Olive Grove, I found that a school cannot just change the classroom without changing the roles and practices that control and affect the classroom. Olive Grove had no checks in place, and no way to make sure that their plan was working. They lacked the skills to cope with problems, and their communication channels were limited by friendship. The staff at Olive Grove lacked the means to assess the success and impact of the changes. They had no idea if their changes were working or if these changes were in the best interest of the children. They were unable to determine whether or not training was necessary and if it was, they had no

governance structure to put the training in place. In short, there must be a mechanism in place to evaluate and assess the effects of the intended reforms.

For Web, they never began the change process as a school. They never opened lines of communication. Without communication, there was no chance for real change. They did not discuss a focus, agree on a reform or agree that a change should be made. The principal made the decisions and assessed the progress of change. This mode of operation ultimately led to superficial changes.

Although Trent seems to have all the mechanisms in place to make whole school large scale change, they did not make a fundamental change to the core. Their change was only instructional. The one thing that prohibited Trent from creating a fundamental change to the core was the identification of the problem. They identified an instructional problem. This fact leads me to my final point and that is that there has to be a clear identification of a need for a fundamental change for that type of change to occur. Even with all of the mechanisms in place for change, if the school does not believe there is a need for a fundamental change, then change will not take place.

Teachers

In research, we have a tendency to categorize people in schools. Unfortunately, these categories make us lose sight of the fact that prior experiences shape individual beliefs and understanding about events such as restructuring. What I found is that the category of teacher can be split into three different groups, and these groups experienced restructuring differently. The three groups are **teachers new to the profession**, **new to the school**, and **experienced**.

To further illustrate my point, this section contains profiles of three teachers to demonstrate how they experienced restructuring differently. I chose to profile three teachers from Olive Grove because this is where the data is the most complete especially in the area of new teachers.

New teachers (new to the profession and the school) were less likely to adopt their school's reform efforts. For example, at Web, all of the experienced teachers used Brain Compatible techniques in their classrooms, but the new teachers resisted this change. A teacher new to the profession said,

> I think that brain compatibility and ITI and Comer have made it more difficult for me to teach because I think I am being held to a standard that I cannot meet. Because I do not think I have been provided with any materials that I was supposed to have...I should not have to paint my room or buy a CD player or buy furniture. I feel I got a lot of political pressure at this school. To conform and change my classroom. I got a lot of negative feedback about colors and furniture arrangement (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997).

Even the experienced teacher saw the problems that new teachers (to the professional and to the school) were having:

> Um, well, uh, you know, from the perspective of the new teacher started this year. They have to do portfolios. I think that's unheard of for a new teacher

> to have to do a portfolio. And to write their own curriculum. I think that's unheard of. I just think so many things are just, you shouldn't hire a first year teacher and expect them to be able to do those kinds of things or to um, thematic teaching. I think it's really difficult. Or to have to have people come in and observe your classes when it's your first year. I think that's really difficult. And they do that at our school. And I don't mind because I've been teaching a while, and I don't care if people want to come in. But I think that for many people, that's really scary. It's really scary (Migdal, teacher, interview, Fall 1995).

The new teachers' (both) rooms were different from the experienced teachers at least in part due to a lack of understanding about the reform and a lack of support in the form of material and professional development.

New Teacher Profile

Ms. Putnam is a 1st year teacher at Olive Grove. She has 26 3-6 grade students in her classroom. The students sit in groups based on grade level. As an example, when students work on a math lesson, she takes one grade level to work with while the other groups work in their grade level appropriate textbooks. Ms. Putnam said of the multiage/multiyear configuration: "their (the other teachers) styles are a lot different than mine—I find that I need more structure—for me I think more freedom will come next year because I will only have 4-6th grade (S.97). As for committee work and taking on administrative responsibility, she said, "It's just another excuse for a meeting" (S.97)

The new teachers (both) were also more likely to have teacher-centered classrooms. At Trent, many teachers tried to get away from workbooks and worksheets, but a new teacher said, "Catholic school is a first year teachers dream–everything had a set of books: One book and one workbook for language and spelling and reading, hand writing and phonics. Here there are not nearly as many books" (Larson, teacher, interview, Spring 1997).

Similarly, at Olive Grove, in new teachers' (both) classes, one was more likely to be able to tell which children were in which grades. In an experienced teacher's room, the class seemed as one (Putnam, classroom observation Spring 1997 and Oats, classroom observation, Spring 1997). At Web, the experienced teachers pointed out that to help focus on the students, "we don't teach from textbooks" (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997), but a new teacher said, "this is my first year with science and I didn't feel like there was as much material as there was in social studies. I need more textbooks" (Rosswell, teacher, interview, Spring 1997, p. 15). But again, these differences seem to be due to a lack of comfort with the reform that can be attributed to a lack of training or support.

"New to the School" Teacher Profile

Finally, new teachers were less likely to like the idea of taking on administrative work. When a new teacher

This is Ms. Zucker's first year at Olive Grove, but her 4th year of teaching. Ms. Zucker has 30 3-6 grade students. These students sit in mixed groupings. Similar to Ms. Putnam, when she teaches a subject like math, the students sit with their grade levels and are taught out of a textbook. Her viewpoint on multiage/multiyear configuration is, "I definitely want to keep it," but she refused to continue rotating students through several classrooms each day. The year before her arrival, her team decided to share all students, but when she arrived, she refused to take part. She said, "It was uncomfortable for me and my students" (S 97). She said she would like to keep the action teams, although, in her opinion, they do not have much impact currently. She said she has been at a school where teachers had no say, and "once we've been where we are we wouldn't ant to go back to the old ways [of no input]" (S. 97).

at Olive Grove was asked if she felt committees were worthwhile, she responded by saying, "I feel it's just another excuse to have a meeting at 7:30 in the morning. Nothing has occurred thus far on the evaluation and planning committee" (Putnam, teacher, interview, Spring 1997). Similarly at Trent a new teacher said, "I want some say in governance, but not this much" (Larson, teacher, interview, Spring 1997).

New teachers (both) all suffered from the same difficulties no mater which school they were a part of. First, and maybe most importantly, the new teachers lacked the training in the areas necessary for successful reform. At Web, a new teacher said, "the only staff development was when we had a day where they said, "Is there anyone who needs help? Buddy up with other teachers who can help you" (Rich, teacher, interview, Spring 1997). Moreover, when a new teacher at Olive Grove was asked about staff development opportunities she said, "some are available but you know again nobody is talking or supporting, and no one is encouraging. You know I've been in places where everyone is trying to encourage you, you know if you don't get your masters then you need to get this or get that. And everybody is talking about continuing their education" (Colter, teacher, interview, Fall 1995). Nevertheless, despite this lack of training at Web, teachers were still expected to implement ITI and Brain Compatible work. Without proper training, it would be impossible to find successful implementation of the restructuring effort in the classrooms. They just did not have the know how to implement the expected changes.

Second, and this is where there is a distinction between new to the profession and new to the school teachers, was the problem with added administrative responsibilities. Some of the teachers new to the school were able to handle the administrative

Experienced Teacher Profile

Ms Johanson has been teaching for 28 years at Olive Grove. She has 23 3-6 the graders in her class. Her class configuration and techniques are very much in line with the majority of the staff members at Olive Grove. Her students sit in mixed groupings. Math is taught based on the students assessed math level (therefore it is possible that a 3rd and 6th grader are completing the same work). There are few directed lessons and few textbooks in use. The students spend a lot of time teaching and helping

responsibilities and may even like them and see them as necessary. But, on the other hand, teachers new to teaching were overwhelmed by the administrative duties. First, new to the profession teachers were trying to learn how to teach and at the same time being asking to lead. A new teacher said, "How can I lead when I don't know the school, and I am just trying to figure out my classroom" (Rosswell, teacher, interview, Spring 1997). At Olive Grove, a new teacher stated that she felt the committees were just another excuse for meetings, while a teacher who was new to the school but had three years teaching experience said,

> each other. Ms. Johanson "loves" the multiage/multiyear configuration. In fact, she was one of the first to try it on the "exploration team" (F. 95). She also feels it is important to have committees. She is the chair of the assessment committee. She says, "it is hard work, but it has to be done" (S. 97) .

> Keep action teams? I'll definitely keep it. I think that we need to look at them again and look at how people look at them honestly and have an open honest discussion about it. Sometimes I think there's a feeling that we don't want to undo anything we've done for fear that it would be seen like fear that if left to their own devises, teachers would just go back to their old ways and we have to keep forging along. I don't think that's true about teachers. I think that once we've been where we are we wouldn't want to go back in a lot of ways (Zucker, teacher, interview, Spring 1997).

Trent did attempt to help the new teachers. Soon after they were hired, the new teachers (to the profession and school) were trained in the writing process Moreover, they have "changed and reduced some of the responsibilities of new teachers. So they don't have as much as more experienced teachers" (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997).

But even with these changes, new teachers (to the school and to the profession) in many ways were left out of the restructuring process, and thus their classrooms were left out of the changes.

Conclusion

The central lesson to be taken from this research is that teachers' roles have not only to be impacted but also supported to achieve school change. Elmore (1996) argued that to create change, you must change the teacher. My work supports his conclusion, but my work illustrates that effecting the teacher is not enough. The teacher has to be supported in very specific ways throughout the change process to create successful reform. Teachers must be supported through opportunities for professional development, through an assessment/evaluation feedback loop that allows for growth not punishment, and through incentive programs to encourage collegial relations and to reduce the stress involved in reform.

Throughout this work, I found that reforms repeatedly fell short of their intended goals due to a lack of support. At Web, one could assume that its small size would make reforms such as moving to school-based governance easy to establish, but I found that in the absence of opportunity to meet or incentive to meet even under ideal conditions, the

change is likely to fail.

At Olive grove, where close friendships had been established among staff members, one would assume that collegial role changes such as communication and evaluating each other's work could be established. But again, without mechanisms in place such as school-wide evaluation and assessment that feedback to the teachers, Olive Grove could not see that their reforms were not working.

At Trent, where one would expect attempts at school-wide change to be unsuccessful due to the large size of the school, the assessment, professional development, material availability and incentives were all in place to make their intended reform successful.

Policymakers need to keep in mind there must be a balance between impacting teachers but supporting teachers to create successful reform. The following policy recommendations further highlight this important balance necessary for successful change:

- Professional Roles
- Externalities Matter
- New Teachers
- Restructuring is demanding and stressful
- Professional Development
- Teachers want a say

Professional Roles

The authors of SB 1274 asserted that changing professional roles can lead to changes in classrooms, and my work supports this claim. Trent provides us with a clear example of the importance of changing professional roles. Trent's teachers moved from only focusing on classrooms to a teacher as administrator role. This movement allowed the teachers to see the whole picture of reform. Teachers know what they need to make the reform work inside the classroom, and for the first time, they had the power outside the classroom to get the material, professional development, feedback and collegial support needed to achieve their goals. Porter (1989) argues that individual teachers know their students' better than any outside source, so teachers are in the best position to determine which techniques work best for their students. However, he also argues that many responsibilities are outside the teachers' expertise and are thus best controlled by administrators. What I found is that he is only part right. Teachers know their classrooms best, but only through this knowledge of the classroom can someone be in a position to know what a classroom needs to make a reform successful. In other words, what Trent demonstrated is that the teachers are experts in the classroom, and thus it is best to make them experts outside the classroom to ensure successful reform.

Externalities Matter

Districts, parents and unions played a role in the success and failure of the restructuring efforts at these schools. If the union or district rules opposed a reform, the school's ability to restructure was severely impacted.

Union regulations, many times, restrict the number of hours that teachers can meet. At Web, when administrators asked teachers to stay after school to met to work on a

committee, they would be reminded that the request violates the union contract. Trent increased teachers' salaried as an incentive for the extra work, but they would not have been allowed to do this without their charter status because it breaks with district policy. Moreover, if parents refused to take on some of the roles and responsibilities asked of them, the teachers and administrators could not alter their roles.

Policymakers have to put policies in place that work within the guidelines of these outside entities or that give the schools the power to work around these forces. Without this support, reforms will continue to fall short of their goals. Maybe more importantly, policymakers must consider districts, unions and parents as separate but powerful forces. If lumped together and considered as one, policymakers will, once again, lose sight of each of these entities individual impact.

New Teachers

Change is difficult for all teachers, but especially for new teachers (to the profession). Maybe schools going through restructuring should leave some of the new responsibilities optional for new teachers. Many new teachers are just figuring out how to teach and at the same time, they are being asked to lead. As a new teacher, leading is a very difficult if not impossible task.

But, in cases like Web, the small school size makes it impossible to exempt new teachers from all additional responsibilities. There just are not enough people to sit on committees if any teachers are excluded. In cases such as this, and maybe in all cases, policymakers must include enough support opportunities for new teachers to allow them to be successful. Support in the form of professional development and collegial support is important for all teachers, but, as my study demonstrates, it is especially important for teachers new to the profession. New to the profession teachers must be given professional development opportunities that focus on the school reform efforts, but also professional development in general areas such as classroom management and curriculum. Maybe more importantly, polices need to provide new teachers with opportunities for collegial help and feedback. New teachers (both) need to have colleagues available to answer questions about reforms as well as general teaching questions. Teachers need to feel free to ask questions without criticism. Humberman (1993) argues that even given the opportunity, teachers will not seek out another teacher for guidance because it would be seen as a sign of incompetence. But if teachers through policy are given a mentor that they are expected to seek out, this culture of isolation may be ended. In addition, as Rosenholtz (1991) argues, collegial feedback will reduce the uncertainties of teaching and make change possible. In short, teachers must be given the opportunity to develop teaching skills as well as to develop the skills needed to make a reform successful.

Restructuring is Demanding and Stressful

Teachers at every school described the demands put on their time, the pressure, and the stress brought about by restructuring. In short, change is difficult. At Trent, a teacher said,

> It's very demanding. It's very, very demanding. I think my biggest problem was the time that it was just, besides the classroom, you know, my job never

> stops. just because I get off at 2:10, I still have a ton of other things to do. And then on top of that, you still have your committee responsibilities. And then, I was going to graduate school, and I do have a life outside of that. At least, I had one before I came here. So, it is just really demanding, really time-consuming, and if your heart and mind isn't in it, then this is not the place to be because you can never ever escape your responsibilities here (Santilla, teacher, interview, Fall 1995).

Similarly at Olive Grove, teachers said things such as,

> T: What do we really have to do?" What I'm experiencing right now is some significant teacher burn-out and so are a lot of people I'm talking to. I think we're looking at a turn over at this school that hasn't been seen in ten or fifteen years. I think you're gonna see some people dropping out and I don't think it needs to be that way. But I know we all feel like we're drowning in a sea of stuff to do.
>
> I: The burnout is attributed to the committees or...?
>
> T: The burnout is attributed to everything we're trying to do--we're trying to do some of it at once.... So you take all the stuff that we're doing and you add it up and it comes out to too much. So it's a combination of committee work and other things that are contributed to the burnout (Fonsworth, teacher, interview, Spring 1997).

Policymakers must put mechanisms in place to alleviate some of the stresses of change. These mechanisms might make teachers more willing to enact change. In line with Elmore's (1996) work, Trent increased teachers' salaries. This increase in salary is seen as an incentive to do more work. Incentives help to justify the long hours which may in the long run reduce stress. But, as Olive grove demonstrates, one addition such as planning time is not enough to reduce stress. Once again , policymakers need to create opportunities for multiple support mechanisms including planning time, increased salaries, support staff, and professional development that address the schools' individual needs.

Without these support mechanisms, teachers in my study had two stages of change 1) burnout and 2) movement back to the norm. Burnout was caused by the additional work without additional time or help. Teachers would begin to resent the work. After burnout, as Cuban (1993) and Lortie (1975) point out, teachers moved back to what they know. They stop anything new or innovative and revert to the teaching strategies they were familiar with. This move to constancy ends any hope of the reform in the classroom from being implemented.

Professional Development

Professional development is also important. Without proper training, reform is doomed. New and experienced teachers would have been less likely to revert to the norms of teaching with proper training.

At Web, one complaint was that all teachers were held accountable for using Integrated Thematic Instruction and Brain Compatibility, but many teachers said, "I did not receive

training in ITI or Brain Compatibility until the end of the year" (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997). At Olive Grove, a teacher during a focus group complained, "We have had some pretty high powered staff development, but nothing on multiage education" (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997). Finally, at Trent, a teacher said, "We have staff development every Wednesday, [but] we have no staff development to deal with our new administrative roles" (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997).

So the main point is that teachers not only need professional development in general, but they need professional development that is linked to the goals of their school's reform. As Fullan (1991) argues, without opportunities for learning, restructuring is impossible.

Teachers Want a Say

Authors, such as Lortie (1975), have argued that teachers even given the opportunity will not increase the time spent with adults because it reduces the psychic reward that come from spending time with child. Arguments such as this seem to continue to shape policies, and thus, policymakers have not attempted to include teachers in the change process. However, my study demonstrates that in spite of the admitted difficulties and pressures, teachers want the added responsibilities that come with being a part of the main decision-making body for the school. They want to be in charge of their own destiny (Grandville, teacher, interview, Spring 1997).

Another teacher at Trent stated,

> Also, as members of committees you sit there and you know you are doing administrative...what used to be totally administrative work, you're not doing it. And it's a whole different job. You're doing the teaching, but you're also now doing the administration of.... And it's more work. You find yourself quite overworked here. But it also is a part of, or the reason why we developed what we did and what we wanted; and where we wanted to go is basically what we as a group decided is where we wanted to go and we all are a part of creating that road to it. But, it's interesting. Now we don't blame the monster out there, we blame ourselves because if something is not working it is us and it's our ?? that we have to change (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997).

Furthermore, a teacher at Trent said,

> The morale is high. To me there is such positive energy going around this school. Even though we are really bogged down with a lot of like tedious stuff. I think the ownership–the fact that teachers have been able to take ownership of the school–and no longer is it the office telling us what to do. That is what I think, the high morale and the ownership that we have. And the positive light that was put in because of all the changes that have gone on (Marcos, teacher, interview, Fall 1995).

At Olive Grove, teachers repeatedly said that they "would not change the action teams or multiage education" (Rathom, teacher, interview, Fall 1995). Even at Web where there is little evidence of a change in governance, during a focus group a teacher said, "I think the good thing for me about restructuring for me is what's intellectually interesting to me is getting to talk to other people who are interested in school reform. I would like to have

input" (teacher, focus group, Spring 1997).

So in opposition to the literature, and in spite of the extra work, teachers want to work together to tackle what is typically administrative work. This work gave them a feeling of ownership and control that they had not experienced previously.

In the end, I find that changing teachers' work is no easy task. But too often policymakers attempt to change classrooms without including the teachers or their circumstances in this change. If policymakers only take one thing from this work, I hope they remember that they cannot successfully affect the classroom without first affecting and *supporting* the teacher.

Notes

[1] Sarason (1982) and Fullan (1996) make similar arguments. Sarason's theory refers to behavior regularities and Fullan refers to second-order changes.

[2] Examples—A Nation Prepared; the subsequent development of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; the role played by NCTM and other professional associations in the formulation of content and performance standards, etc.

[3] The grant application process asked schools and districts to think through plans, and to rethink and create new structures and practices around six major elements of schooling which the legislation identified. From the six elements, the California Center for School Restructuring (CCSR), which was created by the California Department of Education to provide leadership, outreach and a support structure for SB 1274, assembled the regional and statewide networks of schools and districts to work on a restructuring plans that included the four goals.

[4]The data for my smaller study was taken from the three elementary "intensive" sites from the larger *School Restructuring Study.* The School Restructuring Study was a privately funded three-year investigation designed to answer the question: To what extent, and in what ways, does SB 1274 enable schools to pursue an ambitious agenda of school-wide change, with prospects for measurably affecting "powerful learning for all students?" Evidence was collected through site visits, surveys, official records, and other documents from 36 randomly selected schools. Nine of the sites —three each at the elementary, middle, and high school levels—were designated as "intensive" sites. In those schools, we made repeated visits and collected a wide range of data. In the remaining sites, we collected data through one-time site visits, school documents, and staff, parent, and student surveys.

References

Apple, M., & Jungck, S. (1992). You don't have to be a teacher to teach this unit: Teaching, technology, and control in the classroom. In A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan (Eds.), *Understanding teacher development.* (pp. 20-42). New York: Cassell and Teacher College Press.

Archbald, D., & Porter, A. (1994). Curriculum control and teachers' perceptions of

autonomy and satisfaction. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis., 16*(1), 21-39.

Barth, R. (1990). *Improving Schools from Within*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Bridges, E. (1985). *The Incompetent Teacher*. London: Falmer Press.

California Center for School Restructuring, *Primer,* 1993.

Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. (1986). *A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. New York: Carnegie Corporation.

Chubb, J. E. (1988). Why the current wave of school reform will fail. *The Public Interest*(90), 28-50.

Cohen, D. & Hill, H. (1997, March). *Teaching and learning mathematics in California.* Paper presented at the meeting of AERA, Chicago, IL.

Coleman, J.,& Hoffer, T. (1987). Achievement and dropout in disadvantaged and deficient families., *Public and private high school: The impact of communities.* (pp. 118-148). New York: Basic Books.

Cuban, L. (1993). *How teachers taught: Constancy and change in American Classrooms 1880-1990.* (Second Ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1993). Reframing the school reform agenda: Developing capacity for school transformation. *Phi Delta Kappan*(June), 753-761.

Elmore, R. (1980). Mapping backward: Using implementation analysis to structure policy decisions. *Political Science Quarterly, 44*, 601-616.

Elmore, R. (1996). Getting to scale with good educational practice. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1), 1-25.

Fullan, M. G. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change.* (Second Edition). Ontario: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press (Chapters 1-6).

Gamoran, A. (1994). *Teacher empowerment: A policy in search of theory and evidence.* (Report ED 372 032). Madison: Center on Organization and Restructuring Schools.

Getzels, J. (1969). "A social psychology of education." In G. Lindzey and E. Aronson (Eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology*(pp. 459-471). Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Giroux, H. (1986). Educational reform and the politics of teacher empowerment. In J. Kretovics, & E. J. Nussel (Eds.), *Transforming Urban Education* (pp. 396-411). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Glidewell, J. C., Tucker, S., Todt, M., & Cox, S. (1983). Professional support systems: The teaching profession. In A. Nadler, J. Fisher, & B. DePaulo (Eds.), *New directions in helping* (pp. 189-212). New York: Academic Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1991). Contrived collegiality: The micropolitics of teacher collaboration. In J. Blase (Ed.), *The politics of life in schools: Power, conflict, and cooperation.* . Newbury Park: SAGE.

Hargreaves, A. (1993). Individualism and individuality: Reinterpreting the teacher culture. In J. W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts.* (pp. 51-76). New York: Teachers College Press.

Huberman, M. (1993). The model of the independent artisan in teachers' professional relations. In J. W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts.* (pp. 11-50). New York: Teachers College Press.

Jackson, P. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Kahne, J. et al. (1991) *Restructuring: Where are we and where are we going?* Far West Lab: San Francisco ERIC ED 342 1333.

Lieberman, A. (Ed.). (1995). *The work of restructuring schools: Building from the ground up.* (Chapters 1 & 8). New York: Teachers College Press.

Little, J. W. (1990). The persistence of privacy: Autonomy and initiative in teachers' professional relations. *Teachers College Record, 91*(4), 509-536.

Little, J. W. & Dorph, R. (1996) "School Restructuring Study" Interim report

Little, J. W. & Dorph, R. et al. (December,1998) *Lessons about comprehensive school reform: California's school restructuring demonstration program.* SB 1274 School Restructuring Study. University of California: Berkeley

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

Louis, K. S., Kruse, S., & Associates. (1995). *Professionalism and community: Perspectives on reforming urban school.* (Chapter 1). Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc.

McLaughlin, M. W. (1989). *The RAND change agent study ten years later: Macro perspectives and micro realities.* (Report No. CRC-P89-108). Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 342 085).

McNeil, L. M. (1986). *Contradictions of control: School structure and school knowledge.* New York: Routledge.

Metz, M. H. (1978). *Classroom and corridors: The crisis of authority in desegregated secondary schools.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1984). *A nation at risk: The full account*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: USA Research.

Nias, J., Southworth, G., & Yeomans, R. (1989). *Staff Relationships in the primary school: A study of organizational cultures.* (pp. 251-280). New York: Cassell.

Olsen, B., & Kirtman, L. (in press). Teacher as mediator of school reform:

An examination of teacher practice in 36 California restructuring schools. *Teachers College Record.*

Pauly, E. (1991). *The classroom crucible: What really works, what doesn't, and why*. Basic Books: New York.

Porter, A. C. (1989). External standards and good teaching: The pros and cons of telling teachers what to do. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis., 11*(4), 343-356.

Rowan, B. (1990). Commitment and control: Alternative strategies for the organizational design of schools. In C. B. Cazden (Ed.), *Review of research in education.* (pp. 353-392). Washington, D. C: AERA.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1991). *Teachers' workplace: The organization of schools.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Sarason, S. B. (1982). *The culture of school and the problem of change.* (Second Edition). New York: Allyn and Bacon.

Talbert, J. E., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school contexts. *American Journal of Education, 102*(February), 123-153.

Tyack, D.,& Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia: A century of public school reform.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

About the Author

Lisa Kirtman
Department of Elementary, Bilingual and Reading Education
California State University, Fullerton
Fullerton, CA 92834-6868
Voice: (714) 278-5901
Fax: (714) 278-3110
Email: lkirtman@fullerton.edu

Lisa Kirtman, Ph.D. is currently an Assistant Professor at California State University, Fullerton, California. Her current research interests include new teacher development and support in the area of mathematics education.

The World Wide Web address for the *Education Policy Analysis Archives* is **epaa.asu.edu**

General questions about appropriateness of topics or particular articles may be addressed to the Editor, Gene V Glass, glass@asu.edu or reach him at College of Education, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287-2411. The Commentary Editor is Casey D. Cobb: casey.cobb@unh.edu .

EPAA Editorial Board

EPAA Spanish Language Editorial Board